

REMARKS

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 1-3 and 11-22 were presented for examination. Claims 19-22 were held to be withdrawn from consideration and claims 1-3 and 11-18 were considered. Applicant notes with appreciation the allowance of claims 11, 12 and 17. Claims 1-3, 13-16 and 18 were rejected variously under 35 U.S.C. §112, §102 and §103.

The Office Action has been most carefully studied. In this amendment applicant has canceled claims 1-3, 13-16 and 18-22 *without prejudice*, and has added new claims 23-28 more particularly pointing out the invention. In addition, claims 11 and 17 have been amended. The new and amended claims have been carefully written to avoid any questions under 35 U.S.C. §112, in accordance with the guidelines and requirements set forth in the outstanding Office Action.

Request for Entry of Amendment

The new and amended claims are directed to the subject matter of allowed claims 11, 12 and 17, as these claims read prior to the amendment herein. No new issues are raised, the number of claims is reduced and the amendment clearly places the application in better condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of this amendment is respectfully requested.

Allowed Claims

Applicant is most grateful for the allowance of claims 11, 12 and 17. In view of this favorable action, all other pending claims have been canceled, without prejudice, to expedite allowance. Noting that claim 11, as allowed, depended from any one of now-canceled claims 1 to 3, minor amendment has been made to rewrite each of these alternatives of allowed claim 11 as separate claims, pursuant to customary practice.

Thus claim 11, as now amended, corresponds with that limb of claim 11 before

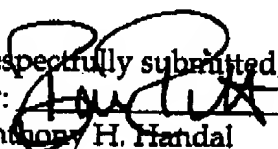
this amendment that was dependent upon claim 1. New claims 23 and 25 correspond with those limbs of claim 11 before this amendment that were dependent upon claims 2 and 3, respectively.

Similarly, the alternatives implicit in claim 12 by virtue of its dependency on claim 11 as it stood before the present amendment and, via claim 11, on claims 1 to 3, are now rendered as amended claim 12 and new claims 24 and 27, respectively.

In a comparable fashion, the alternatives set forth in claim 17 before amendment have been rendered as amended claim 17 and new claims 25 and 28.

The foregoing amendments are believed to clearly constitute correction of minor informalities which do not narrow any claim or any claim element and are unrelated to patentability. Accordingly, there is no surrender of any equivalents.

In view of the above amendments and the discussion relating thereto, it is respectfully submitted that the instant application, as amended, is in condition for allowance. Such action is most earnestly solicited. If for any reason the Examiner feels that consultation with Applicant's representative would be helpful in the advancement of the prosecution, he or she is invited to call the telephone number below for an interview.

Respectfully submitted,
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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being facsimile transmitted to the United States Patent and Trademark Office on July 18, 2003.


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